Wide Devastation By Big Bomb Told

By Stuart Auerbach
Washington Post Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 27—Americans are blasting Indochina with a bomb that kills most living things within a square mile to create an instant helicopter landing pad, two scientists reported here today.

The Defense Department has never hidden its use of the 7½-ton "command vault" bomb, but the full extent of its devastation has never before been fully realized.

The bomb, which floats to earth by parachute and explodes just above the treetops, "totally flattens" an area about the size of two football fields, Drs. Arthur H. Westing and E. W. Pfeiffer told a session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting.

Although the officially proclaimed uses for the bomb are clearing helicopter landing pads and creating landslides to block roads from the north, Pfeiffer and Westing said they have been told by U.S. Embassy officials that it is also used to destroy Vietcong bunkers.

(Air Force spokesmen, asked about the bomb yesterday, said it was used for land clearing operations, but had a poor cratering effect and was not good for causing road-blocking land slides. The Air Force also said the bombs were

See SCIENCE, A6, Col. 1

Soviet Defector Here Redefects

A major in Soviet intelligence whose defection in October led to the expulsion from Belgium of 37 Soviet officials as spies changed his mind and redefected from Washington to Moscow Sunday night.

Details on Page A3

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1971

United Press International

Secretary Laird: Current raids of "limited duration."

SCIENCE, From A1

used in small quantities during the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos early this year to help knock out enemy bunkers.)

The Air Force, they said, denies this. But they quored Stephen Winship, a political-military affairs officer in Saigon, as the source of their information.

So far, the two scientists said the defense department told them, 150 huge bombs have been dropped in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

That means, said Pfeiffer, that most of the wildlife within an area totalling 116,400 acres of Indochina had been killed. "It kills everything," said the University of Montana zoologist, "monkeys, water buffalo, pheasants, everything."

Pfeiffer and Westing, a biologist from Windham College in Putney, Vt., have both traveled to Vietnam to study the effects of the war on Indochina's environment for the AAS and the Scientists Institute for Public Information. Their last trip was made in August.

Pfeiffer said in an interview that they learned at that time about the three-pronged effect of the new Air Force bomb: the immediate flattening effect, the killing effect within one square mile and an "injury zone" that ranges in a circle three square miles from the blast point.

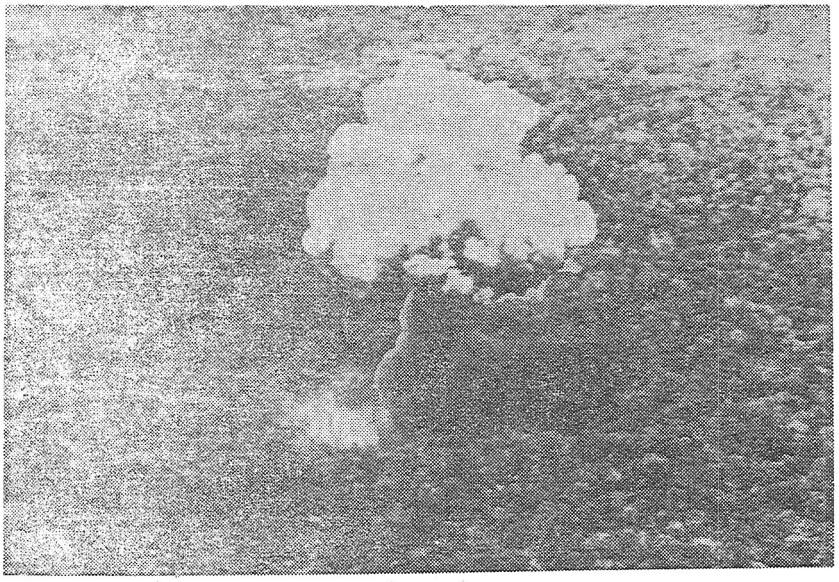
The above ground explosion creates an enormous force that literally blows away all trees and brush. The negative air pressure above the ground, Pfeiffer and Westing reported, also causes the underground Vietcong bunkers — which have a higher air pressure — to explode. These bunkers have been almost completely immune from traditional bombing.

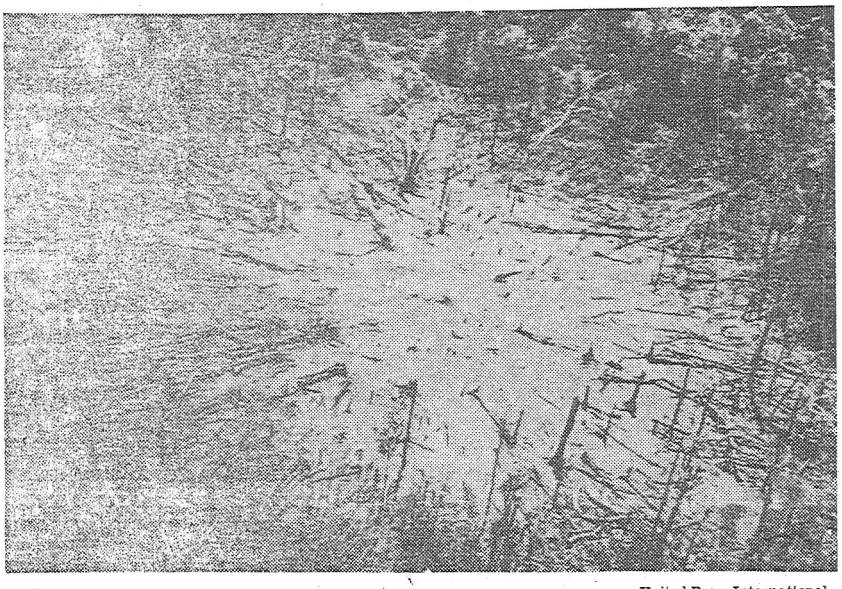
The blast — almost as powerful as the explosion of a small atomic bomb — sends a mushroom cloud 6,000 feet up, the scientists said.

"We were told that light aircraft flying more than two miles from the explosion are badly shaken by the shock wave," they said.

Pfeiffer and Westing, who helped stop the U.S. chemical defoliation program in Vietnam through studies done for the AAAS, today pointed out a new American practice that they said was equally destructive.

This is the use of bulldozers, each protected with 14 tons of armor, to completely clear





United Press International

Top picture shows a mushroom cloud resulting from explosion of a 7½-ton "command vault" bomb, the largest non-nuclear weapon first used in Indochina in April for the purpose of clearing a helicopter landing zone (bottom picture).

land that the Army thinks is being used by North Vietnam and Vietcong troops.

The army has five companies, each with 30 bulldozers, engaged in land clearing — which the scientists called far more effective than herbicides, but more dangerous to the Americans and to the ecology of Indochina.

Unexploded American bombs in South Vietnamese fields are injuring villagers who are trying to reclaim the heavily cratered land, Westing said. He estimated there are "several hundred thousand" unexploded bombs and artillery shells in Vietnam.

In all, Pfeiffer estimated that American bombing—during the Indochina war the United States has dropped twice the tonnage of bombs used in World War II—has created 20 million craters. These are 20 to 50 feet wide and 5 to 20 feet deep, and in the delta they are filled with water.

"The present-day U.S. policy of massive defoliation, crop destruction, bombing and plowing of Indochina can be viewed as a modern counterpart to the extermination of the bison in the American West, he said.

"This modern program, for which the U.S. government must be held accountable, has as destructive an influence on the social fabric of Indochinese life as did the ecocide (destruction of ecology) of the American West upon the American Indian."